

## Care and Feeding of Young 1520's

*As the Aerospace Maintenance Duty Officer (152X) Detailer, I have had the opportunity to talk with several squadron CO's and XO's about our community. These discussions have been wide ranging, but each has touched on the subject of 1520 career progression. As a result of these conversations, I took the liberty of putting on paper what I had been discussing with these squadron commanders. What follows is in the format of a short note from me to your squadron CO/XO that I hope will answer some of their questions or concerns about our community. Please feel free to share this article with them as you see fit.*

Skipper,

At some point during your tour as squadron XO or CO, I hope you have pondered the question, "What do I need to do to "take care" of the young 1520's in my squadron?" The amount and types of responsibilities (and how it is documented) you give these young maintenance professionals will have a major impact on not only their Navy career but may also have significant impact on the health of Naval Aviation in future years. I would like to offer some information that I think will help you make the right decisions regarding your 1520's.

*Does a 1520 need to get the "MMCO ticket" punched while he is in the squadron?* The short answer is, "It depends." For a 1520 to progress and be competitive, he or she should perform as a squadron MMCO. Each 1520 also normally completes at least two squadron tours as a LT or below. So, if the 1520 in question is on his/her first squadron tour and will have the opportunity to be the MMCO in another squadron down the road, you are not "hurting" him/her by not allowing them to be the MMCO. However, if your 1520 will not get another JO squadron tour, he needs to be the MMCO (if, in your judgement, he/she can handle it). Assigning your young 1520 as the MMCO does two things. First, it says that the officer is a competent maintenance professional - you wouldn't give him/her

that much responsibility in the first place if he/she did not have your complete trust and confidence. And, second, the experience gained while actually in the MMCO "driver's seat" cannot be duplicated in any other job and will serve the officer well in all future assignments, regardless of paygrade.

*What do I need to put in their FITREP's?* If you want to help your 1520 get promoted, you need to do three things (minimum) in their FITREP.

- Provide a breakout in block 41, e.g. "LT Smith is the number one of 22 Lieutenants in the squadron, regardless of designator."
- Mark him/her as an "EP." Most of the time, a 1520 will be a "one of one, EP" If you mark him/her as a "one of one, MP (or anything besides an EP)," you have definitely sent a message to the board (that message would be, "Do NOT select this officer!").
- Give him/her a trait average that is above your cumulative (lifetime) average. If you say in Block 41 that this officer is "the best LT you have ever seen!" and give him/her a trait average that is below your cumulative (lifetime) average, your breakout becomes meaningless.

One other comment about your FITREP averages. You cannot give an officer a trait average above (or below, for that matter!) your cumulative average, if you do not know your average. And, remember, the average that is posted on an officer's PSR is not necessarily what you have computed in your Excel spreadsheet on your local hard drive. What goes on your officer's PSR (and is viewed by Selection Boards) is what NPC has in the "system" – if you have signed FITREPs that are not yet processed by the Bureau, your average in the system may not be what you think it is.

*What about collateral assignments?* Collateral assignments for a young 1520 are great! However, you cannot go overboard with this and expect the young 1520 to learn everything he/she needs to learn during their initial squadron tours. What do I mean by "overboard?" Well, assigning your 1520 as the Tiger Cruise Coordinator is fine, but making him/her the squadron Legal Officer is a bit much. Most young 1520's could do an outstanding job as the squadron Legal Officer; however, while they are busy being the Legal Officer, they are not doing maintenance "stuff." This lack of time spent in the NAMP, on the flight deck, in Maintenance Control, in the work centers, etc. will definitely have an adverse impact on their development as professional maintainers. Please, do us all a favor – resist the temptation to treat your young 1520's as just "fresh meat" – give them the opportunity to learn and do "maintenance."

Hopefully, these recommendations will help you take care of the 1520 who is doing an outstanding job. However, if you have a 1520 who is a marginal performer, no one

expects you to "take care" of him/her. On the contrary, if your 1520 is not performing up to standards, we want to see that in writing (FITREP's) and he/she should be counseled accordingly.

I mentioned in the first paragraph that your decisions regarding the 1520's in your squadron could have a major impact on the future of Naval Aviation. I was not kidding! These young officers are your future CAGMOs and AIMD Officers. They are your future TYPEWING, TYCOM, and Fleet Maintenance Officers. They are the future Naval Air Systems Command program managers. They are your future OPNAV policy and funding/budget leaders for maintenance, enlisted training, and the entire aviation warfighting support process that is core to the Navy mission. One of the biggest strengths of the 1520 Community is the fleet experience we bring to the table on these staffs. If a 1520's fleet experience is lacking, the decision he/she makes may not be the best decision and then we all pay the price.

One last word... I am available any time (as are most senior 1520's including your local CAGMO, WINGMO, or AIMD Officer) and would be very happy to discuss any of these issues, 1520 career progression in general or specific 1520 officer concerns with you - please give me a call or an email. Thanks for your time.

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